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291522Z May 01

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	DOPE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EUR-00	FAAE-00	FBIE-00
	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00
	AC-01	NSAE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00
	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/007W

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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8975
INFO NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001727

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JENDAYI FRAZER

LONDON FOR CHARLES GURNEY

PARIS FOR BISA WILLIAMS

NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

PASS USAID FOR AFR/SA - C. PALMA

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/29/11
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER MAHACHI DIES SUDDENLY
LEAVING A THIRD CABINET VACANCY IN A MONTH

CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE D'AFFAIRES EARL M. IRVING FOR
REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) ADDRESSEES WILL HAVE SEEN PRESS REPORTING OF THE DEATH MAY 26 OF MINISTER OF DEFENSE MOVEN MAHACHI. MAHACHI WAS IN THE BACK SEAT OF A HEAVILY LOADED LAND ROVER DISCOVERY THAT WAS HIT BROADSIDE BY A CAR WHOSE DRIVER WAS REPORTEDLY DRUNK. THE IMPACT CAUSED THE MINISTER'S VEHICLE TO ROLL AND THE TALL MAHACHI, WHO WAS SITTING HIGHER THAN OTHER PASSENGERS, WAS KILLED INSTANTLY WHEN THE CAR'S ROOF COLLAPSED ON HIS HEAD, ACCORDING TO EGYPTIAN DCM KADRI ABDEL-MOTTALEB, WHO HEARD THE ACCOUNT OF ARMY COMMANDER CONSTANTINE CHIWENGA. POLICE HAVE TAKEN PAINS TO SAY THAT THERE WAS NOTHING SINISTER ABOUT THE CRASH, A WAY OF DYING LONG ASSOCIATED HERE WITH ZANU-PF POLITICAL ASSASSINATION. MAHACHI'S DEMISE IN A ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENT IS THE SECOND IN A MONTH (MINISTER OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, GENDER AND EMPLOYMENT CREATION BORDER GEZI WAS KILLED ON APRIL 28) AND HAS LEFT PRESIDENT MUGABE REELING. THE LATE DEFENSE MINISTER WAS ONE OF THE ZANU-PF "OLD GUARD," WHO FOUGHT SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH MUGABE IN MOZAMBIQUE AND WAS A MEMBER OF HIS DELEGATION AT THE LANCASTER HOUSE CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE.

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2. (C) MAHACHI'S DEATH CREATED THE THIRD CABINET VACANCY IN A MONTH (MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE NKOSANA MOYO RESIGNED SUDDENLY IN EARLY MAY). IN ZIMBABWE DEPUTY MINISTERS DO NOT AUTOMATICALLY SUBSTITUTE THEIR MINISTERS. MUGABE, WHO IN THE PAST HAS BEEN KNOWN TO PUT OFF MAKING DECISIONS ON CABINET APPOINTMENTS UNTIL THE URGENCY OF EVENTS FORCES HIM TO TAKE ACTION, MUST BE FEELING THE PRESSURE TO PUT TOGETHER A NEW TEAM. BOTH GEZI AND MAHACHI WERE ELECTED MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND THEIR VACANT SEATS MUST BE FILLED WITH A BY-ELECTION. FORMER INDUSTRY MINISTER MOYO -- WHO WAS NOT AN ELECTED MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT -- DID NOT HAVE A DEPUTY; THE MINISTRY IS BEING TEMPORARILY HEADED BY THE PERMANENT SECRETARY, STUART COMBERBACH. COMBERBACH, ONE OF THE FEW SENIOR WHITES REMAINING IN GOVERNMENT, IS A COMPETENT TECHNOCRAT BUT, THOUGH CLOSE TO RETIRED ZANU-PF STALWART NATHAN SHAMUYARIRA, IS SEEN AS A POLITICAL LIGHTWEIGHT.

3. (C) AT THIS WRITING WE CAN ONLY SPECULATE ABOUT WHOM

MUGABE WILL PLACE IN THESE VACANCIES. LAST JUNE THE NEW CABINET HE ROLLED OUT APPEARED MEANT TO IMPRESS THE WORLD THAT ZIMBABWE WAS READY TO TACKLE ITS ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS. THIS YEAR WE WOULD WAGER THAT THE ZIMBABWEAN PRESIDENT WILL PLACE A PREMIUM ON LOYALTY FOR HIS APPOINTMENTS, AND WILL AIM TO SELECT THOSE WILLING TO DO EVERYTHING NECESSARY TO ENSURE HIS REELECTION IN 2002. WE DOUBT, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT DEPUTY MINISTER OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, GENDER AND EMPLOYMENT CREATION SHUVAI MAHOFA WILL BE PROMOTED TO MINISTER, AS SHE IS PERCEIVED TO HAVE GOTTEN THE PORTFOLIO FOR BEING A PROTEGEE OF

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VICE PRESIDENT MUZENDA. SOME OBSERVERS PREDICT THE MINISTRY MIGHT GO TO OLIVIA MUCHENA, CURRENTLY MINISTER OF STATE IN VICE PRESIDENT MSIKA'S OFFICE. FILLING THE DEFENSE PORTFOLIO IS ONE THAT WILL REQUIRE CONSULTATION WITH THE CHIEFS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND ONE IN WHICH SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT EMMERSON MNANGAGWA, WHOSE COMMERCIAL BIDDING IN THE CONGO MAHACHI DID, WILL BE INTIMATELY INVOLVED IN VETTING. IN ANY CASE, BALANCING CROSS-CUTTING POLITICAL AND REGIONAL RIVALRIES, CURRENTLY TEARING ZANU-PF APART, WILL BE FOREMOST ON THE PRESIDENT'S MIND AS HE ASSEMBLES HIS NEW CABINET.

14. (C) MUGABE WILL BE HARD-PRESSED TO FIND SUPPORTERS AS UNQUESTIONINGLY ENTHUSIASTIC AS GEZI AND MAHACHI. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT, GIVEN HIS PENCHANT FOR SPRINGING SURPRISES, THE ZIMBABWEAN CHIEF EXECUTIVE COULD PROMOTE A WAR VETERAN LEADER AS DEFENSE MINISTER IN A NOD TO THAT CONSTITUENCY'S CURRENT IMPORTANCE, ALTHOUGH NATIONAL LIBERATION WAR VETERANS' ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT CHENJERAI HUNZVI IS SERIOUSLY ILL AND NOT EXPECTED TO RECOVER HIS HEALTH. THE SO-CALLED WAR VETERANS WHO COMPRISE ZANU-PF'S GANGSTER MILITIA, HOWEVER, WOULD NOT COMMAND THE RESPECT OF PROFESSIONAL MILITARY OFFICERS, WHO CONSIDER HUNZVI AND HIS ILK UNDISCIPLINED

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TROUBLEMAKERS. REGARDLESS OF WHOM HE ULTIMATELY CHOOSES FOR THE THREE CABINET POSTS, WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT MUGABE WILL IMPOSE ORDER FROM THE TOP AND PROLONG ZANU-PF'S PATHOLOGY. AS THE PARTY HAS NEITHER CARROTS TO OFFER THE POPULATION NOR A TRACK RECORD ON WHICH TO RUN, WE PREDICT THAT THE ZIMBABWEAN PRESIDENT WILL UNLEASH UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS OF VIOLENCE ON THE POPULATION TO COMPENSATE FOR THE VULNERABILITY HE IS FEELING. WITH MAHACHI AND GEZI NOW CONSIGNED TO THE ASH HEAP OF HISTORY, AND HUNZVI NOT FAR BEHIND, WE WILL HAVE TO WATCH CLOSELY TO SEE WHETHER MUGABE IS ABLE TO FIND OTHERS WILLING TO WAGE WAR AGAINST THEIR OWN PEOPLE WITH

AS MUCH RELISH.

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